Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 2, line 14 and ending at line 19 with the following paragraph:

--It is therefore an object of the present invention a pre-polymerized catalyst component for the polymerization of ethylene, optionally in mixtures with olefins CH_2=CHR, wherein R is a C1-C12 alkyl group, characterized by comprising a non-stereospecific solid catalyst component, comprising Ti, Mg and a halogen, which is pre-polymerized with an alpha olefin CH_2=CHR^1 wherein R^1 is a C1-C8 alkyl group, to such an extent that the amount of the α-olefin pre-polymer is up to 100g per g of said solid catalyst component.--

In the Claims

Please amend claims 1-18 to read as follows:

--1. (Amended) A pre-polymerized catalyst component for the polymerization of ethylene optionally in mixtures with olefins CH_2=CHR, wherein R is a C1-C12 alkyl group, comprising a non-stereospecific solid catalyst component, comprising Ti, Mg and a halogen, which is pre-polymerized with an α-olefin CH_2=CHR^1 wherein R^1 is a C1-C8 alkyl group, and the amount of the α-olefin pre-polymer is up to 100g per g of said solid catalyst component.

2. (Amended) The pre-polymerized catalyst component according to claim 1 in which the amount of the α-olefin polymer is less than 15 g per g of said solid catalyst component.

3. (Amended) The pre-polymerized catalyst component according to claim 2 in which the amount of the α-olefin polymer is from 0.8 to 4 g per g of solid catalyst component.

4. (Amended) The prepolymerized catalyst component according to claim 1 comprising a titanium compound and a magnesium dihalide.

5. (Amended) The pre-polymerized catalyst component according to claim 1 in which the magnesium dihalide is magnesium dichloride in active form and the titanium compound is selected from the compounds of formula $Ti(OR)_{n-y}X_y$, where R is a C1-C20 hydrocarbon group, X is a halogen, n is the valence of titanium and y is a number between 1 and n.

6. (Amended) The pre-polymerized catalyst component according to claim 5 in which the titanium compound is chosen from $TiCl_4$, $TiCl_3$ and Ti-tetralcoholates or Ti-chloroalcoholates of formula $Ti(OR^{II})_aCl_{n-a}$ where n is the valence of titanium, a is a number comprised between 1 and n, and R^{II} is a C1-C8 alkyl or aryl group.

7. (Amended) The pre-polymerized catalyst component according to claim 1 in which the solid catalyst component to be pre-polymerized has a surface area, by B.E.T. method, between 20 and 500 m^2/g, and a total porosity, by B.E.T. method, higher than 0.2 cm^3/g.

8. (Amended) The pre-polymerized catalyst component according to claim 1 in which the solid catalyst component to be pre-polymerized has a porosity (Hg method) due to pores with radius up to 10000 Å, of from 0.3 to 1.5 cm^3/g.

9. (Amended) The pre-polymerized catalyst component according to claim 1 in which the solid catalyst component is pre-polymerized with an α-olefin selected from propylene, butene-1, hexene, 4-methyl-1-pentene, and octene-1.

10. (Amended) The pre-polymerized catalyst component according claim 9 in which the α-olefin is propylene.

11. (Amended) The pre-polymerized catalyst component according to claim 1 in which the solid catalyst component to be pre-polymerized is obtained by:

(a) reacting a compound $MgCl_2.mROH$, wherein $0.3 \leq m \leq 1.7$ and R is an alkyl, cycloalkyl or aryl radical having 1-12 carbon atoms, with a titanium compound of the formula $Ti(OR^{II})_bX_{y-b}$, in which b is comprised between 0 and 0.5, y is the valence of titanium, X is a halogen and R^{II} is a C1-C20 hydrocarbon group;

(b) reacting the product obtained from (a) with an Al-alkyl compound; and

(c) reacting the product obtained from (b) with a titanium compound of the formula $Ti(OR^{II})_nX_{y-n}$, in which R^{II} is a C1-C20 hydrocarbon group, X is a halogen, n is the valence of titanium, and y is a number between 1 and n.

12. (Amended) The pre-polymerized catalyst component according to claim 1 in which the solid catalyst component to be pre-polymerized is obtained by:

(a) thermally dealcoholating adducts $MgCl_2 \cdot pEtOH$, where p is a number between 2 to 3.5, until forming adducts in which the alcohol content is reduced to values lower than 2 mols per mol of magnesium dihalide;

(b) treating the thermally dealcoholated adduct of step (a) with chemical reagents capable of reacting with the OH groups of the alcohol to dealcoholate the

adduct until the alcohol content is reduced to values which are lower than 0.5 mols; and

(c) reacting the chemically dealcoholated adduct of step (b) with a Ti compound of formula $Ti(OR^{II})_{n-y}X_y$, where R^{II} is a C1-C20 hydrocarbon group, X is a halogen, n is the valence of titanium and y is a number between 1 and n.

13. (Amended) The pre-polymerized catalyst component according to claim 1 in which said pre-polymerization is carried out using amounts of an alkyl-Al compound such as to have an Al/Ti molar ratio from 0.001 to 50.

14. (Amended) The pre-polymerized catalyst component according to claim 13 in which the Al-alkyl compound is a trialkyl aluminum compound.

15. (Amended) The pre-polymerized catalyst component according to claim 14 in which the trialkyl aluminum compound is chosen from triethylaluminum, triisobutylaluminum, tri-n-butylaluminum, tri-n-hexylaluminum, and tri-n-octylaluminum.

16. (Amended) A process for the (co)polymerization of ethylene characterized in that it is carried out in the presence of a catalyst comprising (A) a pre-polymerized catalyst component comprising a non-stereospecific solid catalyst component, comprising Ti, Mg and a halogen, which is pre-polymerized with an α-olefin $CH_2=CHR^I$ wherein R^I is a C1-C8 alkyl group, and the amount of the α-olefin pre-polymer is no greater then 100g per g of said solid catalyst component; and (B) an Al-alkyl compound.

17. (Amended) The process according to claim 16 in which ethylene is copolymerized with olefins $CH_2=CHR$, wherein R is a C1-C12 alkyl group.